

Once again, my congratulations to you all. May God bless your enterprises, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the International Ballroom Center at the

Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Margaret “Midge” Baldrige, widow of former Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige; and Letitia Baldrige, his sister.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Governor, the Mayor, and the Congressional Delegation of New York *March 7, 2002*

Thank you all very much for coming. As you can see, I’m standing with the mighty—and I emphasize “mighty”—New York delegation. Right after the September the 11th tragedy, I made a pledge to Senator Schumer and Senator Clinton, Governor Pataki, the whole delegation, that our Government would commit at least \$20 billion to help rebuild New York and to take care of the tragedy that befell that magnificent city.

I want to thank the Members who are here who have worked closely with my administration to achieve the common objective of putting \$20 billion of Federal money to help the city, surrounding State, the people. And as a matter of fact, as of right now, there’s an over \$20 billion commitment.

Now, this is the right thing to do. It’s the absolute right position for our Government to take. It is essential that New York City come back and come back strong, for the good of the entire Nation.

I will tell you that I am so proud of the citizens of the city in that part of our country. They have shown the world how strong America is in the face of tragedy. They’ve shown a character that runs deep in the American psyche, that we will not be intimidated, that we won’t fail. And it’s a proud moment for me to thank the delegation here and to welcome the Governor and the mayor and the Senators and Congresspeople. I look forward to continuing to work with these officials as the mighty city of New York recovers.

And so it’s now my honor to bring to the podium the Governor of New York City—the State of New York and then the mayor and then the Senators. First, Governor George Pataki.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City.

Remarks on the Situation in the Middle East and an Exchange With Reporters *March 7, 2002*

The President. Good afternoon. I’m deeply concerned about the tragic loss of life and escalating violence in the Middle

East. This is a matter of great interest to the United States and all who want peace in the region and in the world.

There is a roadmap to peace. The Tenet security work plan will bring parties together to reduce the violence, improve the security situation, and return to the path of peace. The Tenet work plan is the first step towards implementing the Mitchell Committee report in full and resuming a political process between the sides.

I'm committed to working with our partners in the region and around the world in the pursuit of this goal. The United States has a vision of a Middle East in which all people, Arabs and Israelis, can live as neighbors in full peace and security.

Recent ideas put forth by the Crown Prince Abdullah—Saudi Arabia have created an opening for discussing this broader peace and for the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel. The United States is committed to exploring this opening.

Because of our commitment to peace, I'm sending General Tony Zinni back to the region next week to work with Israel and the Palestinians to begin implementing the Tenet work plan so that the parties can renew their efforts for a broader peace. The United States will do all it can to help the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority restore hope to their people and to the region.

I once again call upon Chairman Arafat to make maximum effort to end terrorism against Israel, which undermines the prospects for peace. And as we move forward, I'm counting on all parties in the region, Prime Minister Sharon included, to do everything they can to make these efforts a success.

The violence and tragic loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives must end. Families on both sides of the conflict share this goal, and so does my country. Peace and stability will be an important topic of the Vice President's upcoming trip to the region. I've asked him to join me today.

Mr. Vice President.

[At this point, Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Powell made brief remarks.]

The President. I'll answer a few questions. Morris [Dave Morris, Bloomberg News].

Administration Initiatives in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, you said all along that the two sides need to break the cycle of violence. There's been a lot of false hopes. The violence continues even today. What assurances do you have, if any, that the two sides are now willing to take that step and break the cycle?

The President. Well, we've had a lot of consultations over the last week and week-and-a-half. We've been on the phone a lot. And we believe now's the time for General Zinni to move back into the region. There are no assurances. That is not going to prevent our Government from trying, trying to get the parties to agree to Tenet, trying to reduce the cycle of violence.

Obviously, there's a reason why, and that is because, as a result of consultations, we believe there's a possibility that we can have an impact. And so the combination of General Zinni's trip and the Vice President's trip may have a positive impact. We'll see.

Yes, John [John Roberts, CBS News]. Then Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Q. Mr. President, your Secretary of State had some rather stern words for Israel yesterday. Do you believe that Ariel Sharon, engaging in his current policies, has become an obstacle to peace?

The President. Well, I read the Secretary's comments, and it sounded like he had pretty tough words for all parties. He's concerned about the level of violence, like I am. He made it clear that Chairman Arafat needs to do a better job of reducing violence, of using his leadership role to reduce violence. He's also deeply concerned,

as am I, about the retaliation, the escalation. It's hard to achieve peace when violence is escalating. And one of the reasons why we're sending Zinni back, and one of the reasons why I hope the Vice President's trip will have a positive effect is because our message is to both sides, reduce violence.

As I mentioned in my remarks, Chairman Arafat must do everything he can to reduce the violence, to stop the spread of violence. We don't believe he's doing enough. And so I thought that the Secretary's comments were wisely balanced.

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the continuing and escalating violence is an indication of failure on the part of your administration in the approach you've taken of refraining to send General Zinni, of not yourself talking to Chairman Arafat?

The President. Oh, I think what the escalating violence shows is that there are people who believe in terror as a way of life, people who refuse to allow a peace process to go forward, people who don't want peace in the region. And our Government is committed to saying to those folks, "We will do everything in our power to stop you from preventing a peace process from going forward."

It is—and the first step toward any political solution has got to be the Tenet plan. George Tenet, obviously, works for the United States Government; he's the person that laid out the plan. There is a roadmap for a peaceful solution. It's going to take a lot of effort by a lot of people, and we're willing to put in the effort and believe that General Zinni's trip can make a difference.

Yes, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Q. Mr. President, why are you personally only talking to one side in this conflict? Why don't you reach out to Chairman Arafat?

The President. Oh, I believe the administration speaks with one voice, and we've got ample amplification to both parties. And our strategy is a well-thought-out strat-

egy. It's one that reminds both parties there's an obligation to seek peace.

I fully understand the Israelis' perspective that they want to defend themselves. That's why I've constantly called on Mr. Arafat to do a better job of reigning in those who would wreak havoc on Israel. I also agree with the Secretary of State that it is going to be very hard to achieve a peaceful settlement if there is a tendency to want to constantly find a reason to escalate. And we hope that the Zinni mission will help get to Tenet, and that's where our focus is. Our focus is to get the parties into a process that the world agrees is a good process.

Saudi Peace Initiative

Q. Mr. President, how is the Saudi plan an opening if it's based on things that the Israelis have long rejected?

The President. Well, first of all, they cannot reject the notion of Crown Prince Abdullah that says, "We recognize Israel's right to exist." I think that's an important opening, and I think that's an important statement by Crown Prince Abdullah.

Secondly, it's a position that I took as well at the United Nations, when I said that there ought to be a Palestinian state—the borders of which, by the way, ought to be negotiated between the two parties—but both states recognize each other's right to exist.

And it's an opening. The Crown Prince's decision to make that statement provides an opening. And that's another reason why the Zinni mission is going forward.

Jim [Jim Angle, FOX News].

Administration Initiatives in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, you've consistently called on Mr. Arafat to make, as you said today, a maximum effort. What seems to be new this week is the administration's skepticism about Mr. Sharon. Are you worried, sir, that retaliation seems to be the only policy that he has in mind?

The President. First of all, I fully understand a nation's wanting to defend herself, and I appreciate that. After all, we're in defense of ourself right now. And I can understand the strong desire to enhance security for a people, and I believe that.

I believe what we're saying, though, is that there's got to be a vision for peace. There's got to be more than security, that there's got to be an attempt to achieve a lasting peace. And I hope that my friend the Prime Minister Sharon agrees with that assessment. I think he does. I think he recognizes that you can't achieve peace by allowing violence to escalate or causing violence to escalate.

So on the one hand, I fully understand his need to protect the people of Israel, and on the other hand, we look forward to working with him to get into the Tenet plan. He thought the Tenet plan was a good plan. He agreed that the Mitchell plan is the proper course of action. And now we've got to work hard to get into it.

Kelly [Kelly Wallace, Cable News Network].

Corporate Management Reform

Q. Mr. President, can I ask you about the corporate responsibility measures you put forward?

The President. Yes.

Q. Some Democrats are saying that they kind of fall far short of what's needed, and they say your own Treasury Secretary, Paul O'Neill, was pushing for stronger measures, lowering the bar for punishment for corporate leaders.

The President. I think what they ought to do is look at my proposals, take a good, hard look at them. They were very sound, solid proposals. It's the first formal package laid out for the American people to analyze about how to reform corporate governance.

I think it's also very important to make sure that, as we reform corporate governance, we don't encourage frivolous lawsuits. I think it's very difficult to have a vibrant

society in the free enterprise sector that is riddled with massive lawsuits all the time. And so I want to have a balanced plan, and I put one out. I'm proud of it. And it would make a lot of sense, and I hope Congress acts on it.

Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, is the recession over now? And looking back, do you think we actually ever really had one?

The President. Well, that's a trick question, Patsy, and I appreciate you throwing that out there. [Laughter] See, I actually read clips from other parts of the world before I came out here today. So, nice try.

There's no question our economy was hurt by the attacks on 9/11. We'll let the statisticians define what happened or what didn't happen. But our economy went through a massive slowdown. And people's lives were badly affected, and a lot of people were laid off.

And that's why the House did the right thing today, and the Senate now needs to act. The House passed a very good bill. It's a bill that not only takes care of unemployed workers; it is a bill that has got some economic stimulus as a major part of it. And now the Senate needs to do something. The Senate needs to act and get the bill to my desk, and I look forward to signing it.

But we've had too much—too much non-movement on this important issue. And it's time to go. It's time to get a bill, and it's time for me to end the press conference. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.); Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister

Ariel Sharon of Israel. The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director George J. Tenet of the Central Intelligence Agency; and the Mitchell report, the Report of the Sharm el-

Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Powell.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on Corporate Management Reform and an Exchange With Reporters in St. Petersburg, Florida *March 8, 2002*

The President. I want to thank Mike and the good folks here at America II for welcoming me and Jeb and members of the Florida congressional delegation. We've just had a fantastic discussion about why this is a unique company. It's unique because it has got a culture that understands that the worker is an incredibly important part of the vitality of the company and therefore its success.

I'm real proud of Mike. Mike started this company in 1989. He had a dream. He worked hard to achieve it. He's wise enough to understand that he's only as successful as the good folks who work with him. And so it's an honor to be here.

In the room, I'm going to talk about the opportunities for this country to usher in a period of responsibility. Part of a responsible society is for there to be a responsible attitude for corporate management toward employees and shareholders and disclosure, if you're a publicly traded company.

America II is really the best of the best here in America, and I want to thank you for letting me come, Mike. And I want to thank you all very much for sharing.

I'll answer a couple of questions here.

Aftermath of September 11

Q. Mr. President, when you looked down on the ruins of the Pentagon on September 11th, didn't you, in your heart of hearts, expect that by the time you celebrated the

sixth anniversary, that you would know where bin Laden was and where Omar was?

The President. No. You know, I knew that we were in for a very different kind of war. And on 9/12 and the days following, when we put the war plan in place, I wasn't sure how long this was going to take. I knew we were in for a long struggle, though. And I never had any artificial deadlines. The good news is, the American people also understand we're in for a long war and that, when it comes to defending freedom, we'll take however long it takes to defend our freedom.

A little later on here, I'll have the privilege of meeting a mom and a dad of a soldier who just died in Afghanistan. And I'm going to remind them that those lives were not lost in vain and that we will fight terror wherever terror exists.

I will tell you, I am pleased at the progress we have made in a quick period of time. Six months is not a very long period of time when you think about the enemy we fight. We've made tremendous progress, thanks in part to the coalition and thanks in part to the brave men and women who wear our uniform. And I am grateful, and so is the Nation grateful.

Those who are preoccupied with one individual do not understand the struggle. We fight terror wherever terror exists. And for those people who say, "Well, one person matters," they elevate that person to